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PROPOSED MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1998-2001

Programme 11. Human settlements

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11.1 The overall orientation of the programme, which is under the responsibility of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS), is to promote the adoption at the national and local levels of environmentally sustainable human settlement policies and programmes and thereby contribute to economic growth, and to further the political and social goals of democracy, peace and equity.

11.2 The broad approach to be followed by the Centre is to provide support to and work in partnership with Governments, local authorities, non-governmental organizations and the private sector in responding to the social, economic and environmental consequences of rapid urbanization and in ensuring that settlements, especially cities and towns, have the capacity to play their key developmental role. Attention is also to be given to issues that cannot be left to the market, especially those which adversely affect the living conditions of the poor and the marginalized.

11.3 The mandate of the programme emanates from General Assembly resolutions 32/162 of 19 December 1977, which established the Centre, and 43/181 of 20 December 1988, on the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000. The mandate was elaborated further in a number of subsequent resolutions and decisions of the Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission for Human Settlements, including the decisions regarding Agenda 21 (chaps. 7, 21 and 28) and the outcome of the recent global conferences.

11.4 By the end of the period covered by the plan, it is expected that the programme will have increased institutional and technical capacity and management capability at the national and local levels and, within the framework of the Habitat agenda (to be adopted by the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), enabled the development and execution of human settlement policies and programmes at the national and local levels that take full advantage of the positive aspects of globalization and democratization and adequately address the negative effects of the phenomenon of marginalization and fragmentation of societies.

Subprogramme 11.1 Sustainable human settlement development

11.5 The accelerated urbanization of the world is a major economic and social development trend of the turn of the century. An increasingly urbanized world implies that achieving the goals of sustainable development will depend largely on the capacity of urban and metropolitan areas to manage production and consumption patterns that are compatible with concerns for the environment and people-centred development. In addition, in the face of the increasing integration and globalization of the world economy, Governments as well as the private sector and non-governmental organizations at the national and local levels will increasingly require policy advice, technical information and direct operational support in implementing Agenda 21 and the Habitat agenda at the urban and local levels. There will also be a need for developing frameworks for international cooperation in the management of human settlements that can bring about and support new forms of partnership between the public and private sectors and communities.

11.6 The objectives of the subprogramme, for which the Technical Cooperation Division is responsible, are:

- (a) To enhance support to the management and governance of human settlements in accordance with the principles of sustainable development as outlined in Agenda 21 and in the context of the Habitat agenda with a view to improving the living conditions of all population groups;
- (b) To contribute to the emergence of an enabling approach to the setting up and management of sustainable human settlement development through the promotion of appropriate national and municipal policy instruments, including regulatory frameworks and legislation;
- (c) To strengthen the capacity of Governments at the national and local levels as well as of the private sector to manage the rapidly growing demand for infrastructure and services in urban and rural settlements in an economically efficient and environmentally and socially sustainable manner;
- (d) To assist Governments at the national and local levels with the mobilization and allocation of financial resources, including private sector contributions, for the sustained management of human settlements;
- (e) To promote land-management approaches that will provide for the requirements of a sustainable urban development process while ensuring that land markets respond adequately to the needs of the public and private sector in an environmentally sound manner;
- (f) To assist countries in mitigating the impact of natural and human-made disasters on the structures and function of human settlements as well as in managing reconstruction activities.

Subprogramme 11.2 Adequate shelter for all

11.7 The world-wide problem of inadequate conditions of shelter, in particular that of the poor and low-income households, challenges the capacities of the public and private sectors in most countries to produce housing at the required scale and at affordable costs. The main focus of the subprogramme is, therefore, to promote national housing policies based on the enabling strategy outlined in the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 and in the context of the Habitat agenda. Efforts will be directed at demonstrating the usefulness of setting up public/private partnerships for shelter delivery, of learning from examples of best practices in the housing sector and of removing institutional and regulatory constraints for the purpose of maximizing the contributions of housing markets to shelter for low-income and vulnerable groups.

11.8 The objectives of the subprogramme, for which the Research and Development Division is responsible, are:

- (a) To promote housing policies and enabling strategies that are responsive to the need for adequate and affordable shelter, in particular of the poor and other vulnerable groups;

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(b) To improve the capacity of national housing finance systems to create viable mortgage instruments capable of reaching low-income housing needs;

(c) To improve the capacity of the construction industry to meet requirements of the housing sector for affordable building materials and related services;

(d) To strengthen the capacity of local communities and non-governmental organizations to participate actively in broad-based shelter delivery partnerships.

Subprogramme 11.3 Human settlement assessment and monitoring

11.9 The conditions of human settlements are inextricably and increasingly linked to other global development issues: population, poverty eradication, employment generation, democratization, technology transfer, environmental protection, global trade, gender or social integration. Policies to deal with these central development issues require a cross-sectoral approach to the global analysis of human settlement conditions and trends.

11.10 The objectives of the subprogramme, for which the Information and Audiovisual Division is responsible, are:

(a) To create awareness of emerging human settlement policy issues arising from major global economic, social and environmental trends, in particular those arising from urbanization through the dissemination of successful and promising practices;

(b) To strengthen the capacity of Member States in establishing data and information bases, including indicators for measuring progress, on global human settlement issues, conditions, policies and best practices;

(c) To increase the effectiveness of human resource development and institutional capacity-building for human settlement management;

(d) To strengthen the capacity of UNCHS to serve as the focal point of reference for exchange of information on human settlement issues, indicators, conditions and trends;

(e) To enhance UNCHS capacity for joint programming and monitoring in support of the implementation of chapters 7, 21 and 28 of Agenda 21 and the plan of action adopted by Habitat II.
